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Poems: "Quiet Silver"; Et al.

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QUIET SILVER

What some could call the "Silver War"
I could not understand as a child--
Were they saying--"Calvary"?
How could that hill be something to ride?
But now I am old enough, we mount
Again to the Place of the Skull,
Through battle after battle
Retreating in triumph.
See what we suffered, blue and gray,
Turned quiet silver.

WAR BETWEEN THE STATES

Oak and elm stand sentinel
East of Paris, Tennessee,
This river, curving centuries here,
Runs to pools, lakes in pages
One can read:
Fallen hieroglyphs of greatness,
Driftwood twisted like Fort Donelson,
Charred foundations undulating
But ancient elm and oak yet standing
Shimmer through a century's waste.
Northerners may blast south past Christmas
And not split these lone survivors
Of war between the states.

A LITTLE CANE HOUSE IN THE BOTTOMS

Beyond the hurricane path of youth and
Mid-earth temblors of our later years,
At last like Davy Crockett's tallowy bear,
I would hollow out a little cane house in the bottoms,
Somewhere hidden down in the brakes,
And after Christmas comes and New Year's,
I'd lay me down to nap--perhaps to sleep--
At least, I'd take a little rest,
Sucking my crippled claw on through the winter
Below the darkness of ancient storms
Till March blows west and cold earth warms.

TO OLD GRAND DAD (WHO SAT FOR THE BUST)

Alone and tippling sour mash liquor
Distilled, bonded with all my fathers'
Most ancient homes, I find
My father's father and his father's father
Come back to sit and sip with me,
Lifting, all, our ancient Norman arms
To clink the bourbon conquest
Of fathers and sons.

BEDROCK

The sun sinking like an agate taw
Will bury brilliance in a sullen earth.
Without poor Steve, we boys slink through the churchyard
Following Pete, away from a service not yet begun.
Each burdened under his armload of rocks--
Flintstones we hurl at the pile they come from,
Bedrock disgorged by gravediggers' dynamite--
We are building no cairn in the violent dark.
On through distant gospels, our missiles whizzing,
Flash of flint, cracking back off the church,
Sparks a-shatter, burst bright Paleozoic
As a primitive preacher stones Stephen to sleep.

BEFORE YOU GO

The moonrise, dusty rose upon the fieldstone,
Moon-cobbled backroad south
And north; then she said,
"Speak, oh yet
A little joy
Beside me here
Before you go."